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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001202

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/25/2015

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT REGISTERS TO VOTE IN KINSHASA -  
REGISTRATION BEGINS IN THE INTERIOR

Classified By: Poloff Gons Nachman for Reasons 1.4 B and D

1. (U) President Joseph Kabila registered to vote in Kinshasa July 24, the last regularly scheduled day for voter registration in the capital. Minister of Interior, Theophile Mbemba, a prominent member of the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) which supports Kabila, also registered in Kinshasa on the same day, as did some politicians from the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) and the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD).

2. (C) The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) extended voter registration in Kinshasa for an additional week until July 31. According to the CEI, 2,766,760 voters have registered in Kinshasa as of July 25, representing over 80% of the estimated voters in the capital. (Note: Although the CEI's stated reason for the extension was to give sufficient time to the population to register, the proximate cause of the decision was Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) leader Tshisekedi's demand that registration be continued to give his supporters time to register. They had been directed not to do so by Tshisekedi, who had been seeking some concessions from the transition government. End Note.)

Registration Begins in Bas Congo and Orientale Province

3. (U) According to CEI officials, voter registration started in Matadi, Mbasangungu, Kisantu, Boma, and Tshela, Bas Congo Province, and in Kisangani, Buta, Isiro, and Bunia, Orientale Province, on July 25th as scheduled. Minister of Foreign Affairs Raymond Ramazani traveled to Kisangani to register, and Monsignor Laurent Monsengwo indicated he will also be registering in the province. The CEI hopes to register between three and four million voters in these two provinces over the next three to four weeks.

Comment

4. (C) Kabila, whose strongest political base is in Katanga Province, had been expected to register there rather than in Kinshasa. His decision to register in the capital along with other prominent PPRD figures, reflects possible party concern over its electoral prospects in Kinshasa. CEI officials said the UDPS has started to encourage their supporters to register, although party leaders have yet to make any official announcements on this regard, and Tshisekedi himself has not yet registered.

MEECE